

# The New Kent Historical Society Newsletter

New Kent County Jail

July 2012

## Tabernacle United Methodist Church



The congregation of Tabernacle United Method Church formed originally in about 1791 under the leadership of William Spencer, a Methodist Circuit Rider from Williamsburg. The sanctuary shown in the painting above, which is still the main part of Tabernacle, was built in the early 1800s on land donated by Washington Richardson. Though the building's completion date is not known, the wedding of James Nelson Timberlake and Sally Williams certainly took place here on January 15, 1821. In 1905 Mrs. Martha Richardson, widow of Washington Richardson, became the first person buried in the church's graveyard. Because the county records were lost in the Civil War, new deed to the church property was signed by James Richardson, youngest son of Washington. A memorial association was formed in 1936 to perpetually care for the cemetery.

Improvements have been made to the building, for example structural support the steeple, structure is still photo here shows joinery used fasten xxxxx accommodate the but the original foreground windows, is still



enhancements to but the original preserved. The small the mortise and tenon the roof rafters to the Additions were built to increasing membership, sanctuary, the building with three used every week.



*The painting of Old Tabernacle, made by L. M. Robens in 1974 hangs in the parish house. The historical summary was abstracted from a history of Tabernacle written by Pastor Tom Tipton.*

The Linwood Fisher home in Quinton was about 15 miles from Richmond on what was once the "main road" and was the site of several historic Taverns. Jim Tarrant, one of our members, provided the following article on one of these historic places.

### **FRAYSER'S TAVERN** **New Kent County, 1783-1816**

What is now called the Old Tavern Farm at the intersection of South Quaker Road (611) and North Hen Peck Road (665) was known as Frayser's Tavern or Ordinary for 33 years, from 1783 to 1816. It was also the Frayser's Tavern U.S. Post Office from 1804 to 1813.

The earliest origins of an inn at this location may reach back to 1691, the same year the county courthouse and nearby Old Tavern were built further east along the Old Richmond to Williamsburg Stage Road. There are references in the early 1700's to Thomas Moore and then William Clopton keeping an ordinary in the general area where Frayser's Tavern was located.

Thomas Frayser of Sandy Point, near Frayser's Ferry in King William County, took over the inn by leasing the land in 1783 from Nathaniel Littleton Savage and then purchasing the land in 1792 from his heir Littleton Savage. The previous owner of the inn is not known to me. But Thomas had a license and the tavern operational in 1783, so there was probably an active inn at that time.

Thomas' tavern appears to have been a fairly extensive operation. His original 134 acres grew to 185 over time. He had three dwelling houses and six other buildings. The number of slaves tended to vary, usually between 9 and 15. He had several horses, cattle and one or two riding carriages [chairs]. Clearly, he was providing inn services for a fairly large clientele on the old Richmond to Williamsburg Stage Road. This road was part of the longer east-west route from the Blue Ridge Mountains to Richmond to Williamsburg to Hampton Roads, a key communication and commercial link in early Virginia. There is, of course, the usual speculation that George Washington stayed at the inn.

Thomas was from the Frayser family that was in Virginia by the 1690's, beginning with John Frayser of James City County who was Sheriff, Captain of a horse troop and who assisted in the establishment of the new capitol in Williamsburg. The family then migrated to York and then King William Counties before Thomas settled in New Kent. This family also gave its name to the June 1862 Battle of Frayser's Farm, which took place on its land southeast of Richmond.

After Thomas died in 1806, his widow Elvira and then son William Beverly continued to operate the inn until she died in 1816, when the tavern and the remaining 134 acres were sold to the Howle family which ran the inn. By 1850 and during the Civil War the Ratcliff family was operating the inn. About 1890-1892, Ratcliff's Old Tavern building, which was then the Robert Clarke home, was destroyed by fire. Thus ended perhaps a near 200 year history of an inn at this location. The present owner of the land, Old Tavern Farm, is Mary Fisher Bryant.

*Ed. Note: Jim ([Tarrant3@verizon.net](mailto:Tarrant3@verizon.net)) thanks Dallas Oslin and Mary Pearson Bryant for help on his article. He would appreciate hearing from anyone who may have comments or more to add to this history.*

### **New Kent In The News** Contributed by Pam Radwani

October 25, 1710  
Virginia Gazette

To be sold at public auction, on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> of November before Mr. Hays door in Williamsburg, by virtue of a power of attorney and deed of trust from John Holt, formerly of this city, merchant to the Honorable William Nelson, Esq. A valuable tract of land, containing about 400 acres of land, lying in New Kent Co., on the main road to the courthouse, and about 5 miles above Doncastles Ordinary.  
John Tazwell

Advertisement  
Virginia Gazette, September 10 1767

Last Friday died of an apoplectic fit, at Warrens's Ordinary in New Kent Co., Va., Va. Capt. George Wilkerson, commander of the ship Madeira Packet of London.

October 1, 1767  
Virginia Gazette  
Whereas my wife Anne hath eloped from me, and although often required refuses to return and being informed she is entertained by her father, John Wilkerson, in New Kent Co., Va. and has threatened to run me in debts. This is therefore to forwarn all persons from trusting her, as I will pay no debts she may contract.  
--Samuel Smith



# Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister

**Brevet Major General Robert McAllister United States Union Army wrote daily letters to his wife and daughters. He provided intricately detailed description of his wartime ordeal for posterity.**

**May 12, 1862 New Kent County Courthouse  
Dear Ellen,**

*I am now sitting in the courthouse on the Judge's bench and occupying his chair of honor. This morning after the West Point battle we went to camp and rested. The next day we were ordered to come out NS MEET General Stoneman, McClellan's advance. We done so, although our order was to return to Franklin's division, General Stoneman saw the enemy in front and would not consent to our going back. If the enemy knew how small a force we have here, thy no doubt would attack us. Success would be in their favour. But by night we will be strong enough for them.*

*That is a rather pretty country. As is generally the case in Virginia, the buildings are all very poor. Most all of the inhabitants have gone. Oh, what a courthouse this is! It is the meanest kind of building. It must have been built in King George's time. When we approached this place, the Rebel rascals burnt the jail and a large storehouse filled with corn. (The jail was full of corn also.) The Rebels destroy everything as they retreat so that we can't get the good of it.*

*It is now thought that we will get to Richmond soon. We are now only thirty miles from it. Fifteen miles from here is the Chickahominy River, where the Rebels are fortifying to receive us and where theking their last-ditch-stand. Our men are in fine spirits and anxious to be led on.*

**May 13, 1862 Banks of the Pamunkey River  
Dear Ellen,**

*I wrote you yesterday from New Kent and had an opportunity to mail it. Last night after dark we got an order to march. When everything was in readiness, we came to to Cumberland on the banks of this river. Then we marched about five miles from Cumberland up here to what is called the White House property. It is a very large and handsome property belonging to General Lee of the Rebel Army. This property came to Mrs. Lee from the Custis side of the family. General Lee . . . was here yesterday morning, as well as his army. In fact, their pickets were in sight this morning. But I think they have fell back.*

*We are within twenty-five miles of Richmond and are in the neighborhood of the place where it is said the Rebels will make a stand. We are pressing steadily*

*on them. If they stand at all, I think they must soon do it . . . Their army is very much demoralized. Deserters come in daily to us. They all say that . . . their cause is now perfectly hopeless and the very best thing for them is to lay down their arms and end this unholy war. I am completely disgusted with Brother Thompson and his son William. I can never have any regard for them again. We will stay here today and most likely tomorrow. We are still acting in con junction with General Stoneman. Our Brigade has not got up with us yet. We are far in advance of all our army. In fact, we have the enemy in our rear, unless they have slipped out this morning. But our situation is a safe one on account of our being on the banks of the river and near the protection of the gunboats. We are also well supplied with artillery. I hear cannonading now, but don't think it will amount to much . . .*

*I have just learned that in the battle of West Point we had 50 killed and 135 wounded and missing. Some of the wounded who were numbered among the missing were killed on the Rebel's retreat.*

*Since writing the above, I have taken a ramble over this Lee property. It is much the finest tract that I have seen in Virginia. I was told today that there is 10,000 acres in it. It is a son of General Lee, a colonel in the Rebel army that lived on it. There are three brothers, all in the army. I am in favor of confiscating all their property and hanging them besides. The buildings here are nothing extra. The yards are large but not handsomely improved. The house is new.*

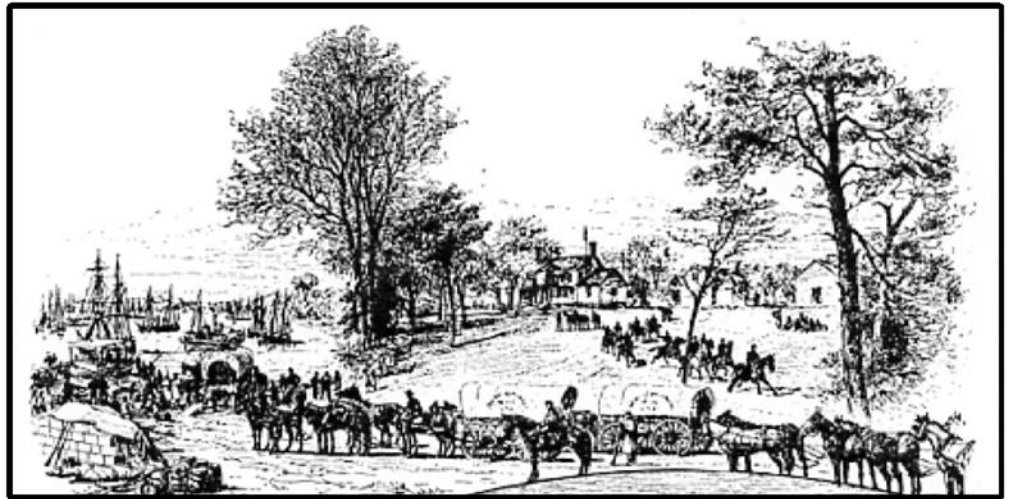
*We have the Stars and Stripes floating from the housetop and a gunboat laying in the river in front of the house with its guns pointing towards it. We will stay here today and most likely tomorrow. We are still acting in con junction with General Stoneman. Our Brigade has not got up with us yet. We are far in advance of all our army. In fact, we have the enemy in our rear, unless they have slipped out this morning. But our situation is a safe one on account of our being on the banks of the river and near the protection of the gunboats. We are also well supplied with artillery. I hear cannonading now, but don't think it will amount to much . . .*

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*Wednesday morning. We were under arms at 2 o'clock this morning, with everything packed and expecting an attack. We thought we might have to retreat until reinforcements came to our aid. We have in this advance but 6,000 troops all told, and it was ascertained yesterday that the enemy had 30,000 in front of us. But daylight has come and we have not been attacked and don't think we will be today. Before night we will have reinforcements. This is hard business. We sleep very little, as we are up by 2 or 3 every morning and sometimes march all night.—L. Allen*



White House, the home of General W. J. F. Lee, McClellan's base of supplies on the Pamunkey River From sketches made at the time. Letters from The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister, edited by James I. Robertson Jr.

**Letter written by a Union Soldier from Maine, this one provided by Pam Radwani.**

Cumberland Landing  
Sunday, May 18

Dear Brother,

I received your last letter containing the stamps, while at Yorktown but as we have been moving most of the time since, I have written but few letters. I wrote a line to Sarah while at Williamsburg and that is the only one I have written since leaving Yorktown. I have received none since leaving there.

We are now encamped at a place called Cumberland landing, on the Pamunkey River a branch of the York. All of our provisions are landed here. It is quite a pleasant place. It is about 25 miles from here to Richmond. Part of our forces are 8 or 10 miles in advance of me at a place called White House landing on the same river. We have remained here two days, but expect to leave soon perhaps tomorrow. The weather is ver y pleasant and quite warm.

We are further South than we were last summer and shall probably be seeing some hotter weather . There is a rumor current here in camp that our Brigade is going back to Norfolk to guard the place, but ths is not reliable. As for me I want to go on to Richmond. If we are

successful there, as no doubt we shall be, some of the Troops will be discharged and our Regiment will stand a good chance to be discharged it being one of the oldest regiments in the army of the Potomac.

I do not wish to come home until this war is ended, which I think will be in a short time. It depends much on the battle at Richmond. It is thought the Rebels will not make a stand there.

The bill I paid 10 cts for, to send you for a curiosity. It is one of the Southern Shin-plasters as they call them. There are worthless where we are but pass current in the South. I have some money that I would like to send home but do not think it is safe to send it from here. I would like to stop in and see you all; also take a peek into the old store. I suppose the store is quite empty about this time. I don't know as I can give you any reliable information about the killed and wounded at Williamsburg. You probably get it as correct in the papers as I can give it.

So you take any paper except the transcript.

Love to all – George

**Silverhall ca. 1780**



Silverhall has been continuously been owned and lived-in by the Binns family since it was first constructed in 1780.



## Newspaper Article from Pam Radwani

Bottom's Bridge was not destroyed by the enemy, but is held by our troops. It was reported last evening that the enemy were falling back, and that their numbers had been greatly exaggerated. It was also said the part which advanced to Bottom's Bridge were about 600 cavalry, but that a large force of infantry and artillery were at New Kent Court House. In the absence of reliable information we give these rumors without vouching for their correctness.

Two hundred federal cavalry advanced as far as Windsor on the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad on Sunday, and camped at the point on Sunday night. Windsor is in Isle of Wight County, about twelve miles from Ivor. It is stated that an entire brigade of the enemy, consisting of infantry and artillery camped at Kelly's in Nansemond county seven miles from Suffolk, Sunday night. The Richmond Enquirer of Sunday says; the War Department was in receipt of nothing later from Charleston up to last night. It was understood, however, that Fort Sumter though seriously breached in the walls, would not be abandoned, and that Beauregard had expressed his determination to hold it to the "bitter end." It is thought that this may be done by the erection of temporary fortifications. The fire of the enemy continues to be divided between Forts Sumter and Wagner, and the bombardment, up to our last advices, was progressing slowly, without any decisive results.

Confederate accounts of the late bombardment at Chattanooga say, Wilder opened without any warning. A daughter of Mr. Roche, of Nashville, was mortally wounded. Three soldiers and five citizens were killed, among them two ladies. On Wednesday evening a personal encounter took place near Richmond between Dr. Currie, employed in the Quartermaster's Department and W. S. Brasford, a clerk in the Second auditor's Office. Currie was stabbed fatally and died in a few minutes. Brasford, who attempted to escape, was arrested and lodged in jail. Two hundred and seventy of the inmates at Castle Thunder, in Richmond, were on Friday returned to the Army of Northern Virginia. The recent proclamation of the president, offering amnesty to many of the unfortunate subjects of the courts-martial has thinned the prison in the most effectual manner. There are fewer prisoners in the prison now than at any time since it was a prison.

## 1831 Notice of Sale from Pam Radwani

MARSHALL'S SALE OF VALUABLE LANDS in the county of New Kent – By virtue of a decree of the Superior Court of Chancery, for the Richmond district,

in a cause therein depending between William Browne and others, on behalf of themselves and other creditors of William Douglass, deceased, Plaintiffs – against John H. and Jones R. Christian, Executors of the said William Douglass, the widow and heirs, Defendants – I shall proceed to sell, for cash, before the Court-House door of New Kent, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of July 1831, that valuable estate lying on the Chickahominy river, the late residence of William Douglass, deceased, called Kaimes – and also the tract of 300 acres, belonging to the estate, and lying in the same county.

CHAS L WINGFIELD

June 17, 1831 - Enquirer

## New Kent Classic



Surely everyone in New Kent has noticed this building. Apparently no one remembers much of its history. Here is what Stran Trout found out about it: **“Lawyer’s Office (White Building), built prior to 1800.** The building has been moved several times, and has been used for many purposes including a clothes closet, youth services, registrar's office, school and treasurer's office. In 1909 the building stood next to the 1909 Courthouse and was moved to its current location in 1960 when an addition was constructed to the Courthouse. Seem to this editor that it was used for voter and draft registration at least during the 1950s. Let us know if you have more information about this building.”

# Chestnut Grove

Chestnut Grove was the birthplace and home of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington, wife of General George Washington who later the first President of the United State of America.

Martha Dandridge, the daughter of Colonel John Dandridge, was born at Chestnut Grove in May 1732. In 1749, she married Daniel Parke Custis, a wealthy planter of "White House" in New Kent County. As a widow, with two small children and a large fortune, she married Colonel George Washington in 1759. Later, as wife of the first President of the United States, she was called "Lady Washington". In Washington's diary, he speaks of visiting his mother-in-law, after Colonel Dandridge's death, at Chestnut Grove.

The building in which she lived as a girl, was a two story, frame structure, the walls resting on a brick basement, which was five feet below the surface of the ground and four feet above the ground, were eighteen inches thick save at the base of the two chimneys, each was five by six feet, with an arch in the basement, six feet high, four feet wide and five feet deep. Timber used in the frame was of white oak, the doors and window casings, popular and the weatherboarding of heart pine. White oak hand riven shingles covering the roof. The nails used were square, hand-made mails. Prior to a fire destroying the house many of the nails had to be replaced because so many had been drawn out by tourist. The basement wall was 58 feet long by 22 feet wide. In the basement was a large dining room, pantry and store room. A kitchen was in the yard nearby. White oak beams 12 X 12, visible from the basement, supported the house. Four of these beams running the width of the house and four staggered across the length, held together by wooden pegs. There were two stories above the basement, with a reception hall, 12 X 20 feet, and two large rooms on each floor, ten feet high, twenty feet wide and eighteen feet long. The stair case was of heart pine rail, popular spindle and post. Out in the river, in front of the house, is a small Island, known as Cook's Island. During the Civil war between the States, gunboats were sunk on either side of the island to blockade the course to Richmond.

In November 1927, this house and contents, mostly antique furniture of rare design, were destroyed by fire.

-LaVonne Allen



Chestnut Grove  
Notes and pictures are from the Nellie Braham Collection



Chestnut Grove Stairwell

Our Vice President dug up a most interesting court record involving a claim on the U.S. Government for damages suffered by a New Kent Church during the Civil War. Key elements of the claim follow Camilla's introduction.

***Trustees of Roper's Church  
New Kent County, VA  
Vs.  
The United States***

On May 22, 1908, the Trustees of Roper's Church, New Kent County, VA filed a claim against the United States Government for damages incurred during the Civil War. Because of the (Little) Tucker Act of 1887, the US government waived its right "not to be sued" for certain kinds of claims for a certain period of time. The Little Tucker Act was for claims under \$10,000. Roper's Church claimed that the church was entitled to payment by the government for the use, occupation, and injury suffered to church property by Confederate military forces during the "late" Civil War. The church building was used for quarters and other military purposes during that time. The estimated cost to restore the building and contents was \$1,000.00. On May 4, 1909, the claim was approved to pay the church a reasonable sum of \$250.00.

**(Court of Claims, Congressional, No. 19666. Trustees of Roper Church, of New Kent County, Va. V. The United States.)**

**STATEMENT OF CASE.**

**This is a claim for use of and damage to a church building by the military forces of the United States during the late civil war. On the 22d day of May, 1908, the United States Senate referred to the court a bill in the following words:**

**That the reasonable rental value of said building during the period it was so occupied, including the cost to restore the building and contents to the condition in which they were at the time the said military forces took possession, was the sum of \$1,000, no par of which has ever been paid.**

**The case was brought to a hearing on loyalty and merits on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1909.**

**G. W. Z. Black, esq., appeared for the claimants, and the Attorney-General, by Stanhope Henry, esq., his assistant and under his direction appeared for the defense and protection of the interests of the United States.**

**The court, upon the evidence adduced and after considering the briefs and arguments of counsel on both sides, makes the following.**

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

**I. Roper Church, of New Kent County, Va., as a church, was loyal to the Government of the United States throughout the late civil war.**

**II. during said war the military forces of the United States, by proper authority, took possession of the church building described in the petition and used and occupied the same for military purposes and damaged the same. The reasonable rental value of such building, together with damages thereto in excess of ordinary wear and tear, was then and there the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250), no part of which appears to have been paid.**

**III. The claim herein was never presented to any officer or department of the Government prior to its presentation to Congress and reference to this court as hereinbefore set forth in this statement of the case, and no reason is adduced showing why the same was not earlier presented.**

**BY THE COURT**

**Filed May 3, 1909**

**A true copy.**

**Test this 4<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1909.**

**JOHN RANDOLPH**

*Assistant Clerk of court of Claims.*

**Ref: Senate document #35 61<sup>st</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Vol. 8.  
(Government Printing Office: 1909)**